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Yoga for LBP and Depression

By RICK NAUERT PHD *Senior News Editor*

Reviewed by John M. Grohol, Psy.D. on September 3, 2009

[Depression](#) is often associated with chronic low back pain as conventional treatment of the pain is modestly successful, at best.

A new study suggests the practice of yoga provides a better alternative for overcoming chronic pain and depression.

The three-year, \$400,000 study by West Virginia University researchers is published in the September issue of the journal *Spine*.

The National Institutes of Health sponsored study showed yoga participants displayed lifted mood, less pain and improved function in the group that compared with a control group who received standard medical [therapy](#).

"The yoga group had less pain, less functional disability and less depression compared with the control group," said Kimberly Williams, Ph.D., research assistant professor in the Department of Community Medicine.

"These were statistically significant and clinically important changes that were maintained six months after the intervention."

The 90 study subjects, who experienced mild to moderate functional disability, were randomly assigned to the yoga group or the group that received conventional medical therapy.

Yoga participants took 90-minute classes twice a week for 24 weeks, doing postures targeted to relieve chronic low-back pain. Follow up continued for six months after the end of classes or therapy.

"Proponents of yoga have long described its benefits in reducing back pain," Williams said. "But not everybody was convinced. This is a much bigger, much more rigorous evaluation than had been done before."

The classes were taught by certified Iyengar yoga instructors. A popular form of yoga in the United States, Iyengar yoga emphasizes postures that encourage strength, flexibility and balance.

In the United States, low-back pain represents the largest category of medical reimbursements, with \$34 billion in direct medical costs reported annually, Williams said.

Source: [West Virginia University Health Sciences Center](#)

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